

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

(Currently amended) 7. An automated cafeteria system comprising:

a cafeteria web site for presenting a menu over a public-access network and for assigning an order number to an order comprised of menu selections;

a computer for viewing the menu presented by the cafeteria web site over the public-access network, for issuing an order message comprised of menu selections, and for receiving the assigned order number ~~over the public-access network~~;

a storage unit coupled to the computer for storing the assigned order number ~~that is coupled to the computer~~;

a label generator for receiving the assigned order number from the cafeteria web site and for generating a label identifying the assigned order number for a corresponding prepared order, the label being associated with the corresponding prepared order; and

an automated check-out station for retrieving the assigned order number from the storage unit ~~coupled to the computer~~ and for verifying that the retrieved assigned order number corresponds to the assigned order number on the generated label for a prepared order presented to the automated check-out station so that the prepared order may be obtained at the automated check-out counter.

(Currently amended) 8. The system of claim 7 wherein the storage unit for storing the assigned order number is a printout of ~~[[the]]~~ an assigned order number received from the cafeteria web site over that public-access network so that the printout may be transported to the automated check-out station for verification of the retrieved assigned order number with the assigned order number on the generated label.

(Currently amended) 9. The system of claim 7 wherein the storage unit for storing the assigned order number is a printout of a bar code corresponding to the assigned order number received from the cafeteria web site over the public-access network; and the automated check-out station reads the printout of the bar code to retrieve the assigned order number and verifies the assigned order number by determining whether the retrieved assigned order number from ~~[[of]]~~ the printout of the bar code corresponds to the assigned order number on the label of the prepared order being presented at the automated check-out station.

(Previously presented) 10. The system of claim 7 wherein the computer is a personal digital assistant (PDA) and the storage unit for the assigned order number is internal to the PDA.

(Currently amended) 11. The system of claim 7 further comprising:

a card reader coupled to the computer; and

the storage unit is a stored-value card so that an assigned order number ~~transmitted to~~ received by the computer from the cafeteria web site may be stored by the card reader in the stored-value card and retrieved from the stored-value card by the automated check-out station.

(Currently amended) 12. The system of claim 7 further comprising:

a card reader coupled to the computer, the card reader for reading a stored-value card having a permanent identification number; [[and]]

the computer receiving the permanent identification number from the card reader so that the permanent identification number is being transmitted to the cafeteria web site for use as the assigned order number so that the cafeteria web site assigns the permanent identification number as an order number to an order comprised of menu selections; and

the automated check-out station verifies whether an assigned order number on a label corresponds to the permanent identification number retrieved from the stored-value card.

(Currently amended) 13. The system of claim 11 wherein the automated check-out station deducts an amount corresponding to the prepared order that is verified as having an assigned order number on its generated label that corresponds to the assigned order number retrieved from the stored-value card.

(Previously presented) 14. The system of claim 7 further comprising:

a basket for holding a prepared order, the basket having a sensor for detecting removal of a prepared order placed within the basket and generating an alarm in response to detection of such removal; and

the automated check-out station for deactivating the basket sensor so that the prepared order may be removed from the basket without generating the alarm in response to the detection of such removal.

(Previously presented) 15. The system of claim 14, the basket further comprising:

an anti-theft device coupled to the basket; and

the system further comprising:

a detector for detecting the unauthorized removal of the basket from the cafeteria so that the basket sensor has to be de-activated in order for the prepared order within the basket to be removed from the cafeteria without generating an alarm.

(Currently amended) 16. A method for automating cafeteria order correlation comprising:

presenting a menu over a public-access network;

selecting menu items from the presented menu over the public-access network to comprise an order;

assigning an order number to ~~[[an]]~~ the order comprised of the selected menu selections items;

receiving the assigned order number over the public-access network;

storing the assigned order number received over the public-access network;

generating a label identifying the assigned order number for a corresponding prepared order comprised of selected menu items;

~~associating the generated label with its corresponding prepared order;~~

retrieving a stored assigned order number from a storage unit at a site where prepared orders having generated labels are located; and

verifying that the stored assigned order number ~~received over the public-access network and retrieved from storage~~ retrieved at the site corresponds to the generated label identifying the assigned order number for a prepared order so the prepared order may be obtained contemporaneously with the assigned order number verification.

(Currently amended) 17. The method of claim 16 wherein the storing of the assigned order number storage is comprised of printing the assigned order number so that the printout may be transported to the site for verification of the retrieved assigned order number with the assigned order number on the generated label.

(Currently amended) 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the storing of the assigned order number storage is comprised of printing a bar code corresponding to the assigned order number; and

the assigned order number verification comprises determining whether the assigned order number retrieved from the printout of the bar code corresponds to the generated label identifying the assigned order number of a prepared order being presented at an automated check-out station.

(Currently amended) 19. The method of claim 16 wherein the assigned order number storage comprises storing the assigned order number in a personal digital assistant (PDA); and the assigned order number verification further comprising:

retrieving the assigned order number from the PDA and
determining whether the retrieved assigned order number corresponds to
[[for]] the generated label identifying the assigned order number.

(Currently amended) 20. The method of claim 16, the storing of the assigned order number ~~storage~~ further comprising:

storing the assigned order number received over the public-access network in a stored-value card so that the assigned order number may be retrieved from the stored-value card at the site where prepared orders having generated labels are located for verification.

(Cancelled) 21. The method of claim 16 further comprising:

reading a permanent identification number from a stored-value card; and

transmitting the permanent identification number over the public-access network to a cafeteria web site for use as an assigned order number for a prepared order.

(Previously presented) 22. The method of claim 16, the method further comprising:

deducting an amount corresponding to the prepared order verified as having an assigned order number on its generated label that corresponds to the assigned order number retrieved from the stored-value card.

(Previously presented) 23. The method of claim 16 further comprising:

detecting removal of a prepared order from a basket containing the prepared order before order identification verification occurs; and

deactivating the removal detection so that the prepared order may be removed from the basket without detection.

(Previously presented) 24. The method of claim 23, the method further comprising:

detecting the unauthorized removal of the basket containing the prepared order from the cafeteria so that the removal detection de-activation has to occur in order for the prepared order to be removed from the cafeteria.

(New) 25. A method for automating cafeteria order correlation comprising:

presenting a menu over a public-access network;

selecting menu items from the presented menu over the public-access network to comprise an order;

receiving a permanent identification number from a stored-value card;

assigning the permanent identification number as an order number to the order comprised of the selected menu items;

generating a label identifying the assigned order number for a corresponding prepared order comprised of selected menu items;

retrieving the permanent identification number from the stored-value card at a site where prepared orders having generated labels are located; and

verifying that the retrieved permanent identification number corresponds to the generated label identifying the assigned order number for a prepared order so the prepared order may be obtained contemporaneously with the assigned order number verification.